

went into prevention benefits. Here is where the money went.

They neglected to mention that the Bush Medicare law creates a \$23 billion slush fund for the HMOs. These are bonus payments for an industry, the HMO industry, which already saw their profits go up 50 percent last year. They can use these bonuses to lure seniors out of Medicare's reliable, equitable, traditional program.

Interestingly, the benefits do not take effect until 2006. Seniors actually cannot get the Medicare benefit until 2006, but the payout to the insurance industry to pay back for the contributions the insurance industry frankly made to my colleagues on this side of the aisle and to the White House began in March of 2004. In other words, the insurance industry as a whole got checks from the Federal Government totaling \$290 million in March, \$290 million in April, \$290 million in May, \$290 million in June, all the way through this year, all the way through next year, \$290 million a month. The benefit is not available to seniors until the following year.

They also forgot to tell us, in addition to this slush fund the insurance industry paid for out of seniors' premium increases, they forgot to tell us that the Bush Medicare law actually goes out of its way to prohibit the Federal Government from negotiating with the drug industry for fair prices to bring the cost of prescription drugs down, which go up at double-digit increases every year.

They did not tell us that the Bush Medicare law will increase drug industry profits, already the highest industry profits of any industry in America, they will increase industry profits, not gross income but industry profits, by \$180 billion, that is with a B, \$180 billion over the next 10 years.

So that insurance industry got huge subsidies, the drug industry got record profits, the Bush administration got huge campaign contributions, tens of millions of dollars from the drug and insurance industries, and seniors were stuck with a 17.4 percent premium increase. It is wrong. The increase was five times larger than it should have been. That is an outrage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINOJOSA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask to speak out of order and to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

FOLLOW-UP TO REMARKS GIVEN TO CONGRESS BY IRAQI INTERIM PRIME MINISTER AYAD ALLAWI: QUESTION TO THE ADMINISTRATION—WHERE IS THE PLAN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the remarks and the message of Interim Prime Minister Allawi, and in fact, as someone who opposed this war as being misdirected and procedurally and constitutionally unsound, inasmuch as the Congress did not follow the Constitution and declare war, this resolution simply authorized the President to look at the option of militaries as one option.

But even in spite of my opposition to the initial beginnings of this war, I welcomed the remarks of Prime Minister Allawi and certainly welcomed his optimism and his desire to tell the American people that there is an end, there is a future in Iraq.

The whole idea of beginning to work with this process of rebuilding Iraq is clearly a circumstance that requires telling the American people the truth, and even though I think that the Prime Minister was eager to engage us in the optimism of Iraq, the one thing that he could not answer for us is simply where is the plan. Where is the plan of this administration, and what do we say to the men and women who are now on the frontlines of Iraq who wear the American uniform?

I just mention and show this gentleman who happens to be a face that has been utilized by one of my colleagues, and I am sharing that with my colleagues tonight, but it reminds us of the Americans who are on the front-line, reminds us of the families who are longing for them to return, reminds us of those troops that I visited in Afghanistan and Iraq who are committed to their duty. But they want to know when they can return home, what is the ultimate plan and agenda for the survival of Iraq.

Prime Minister Allawi told us that things were getting better, that schools were opening, clinics were opening; but, frankly, I believe that in the backdrop of all of that, the violence is raging.

Let me cite for my colleagues words from Jessica Mathews who just returned from Iraq. She made this statement in an op-ed in the Thursday Washington Post: "To visit Iraq today is to be forcibly reminded of the obvious: there is no military solution to politically inspired violence by locals against foreigners. What was true for the French in Algeria, the British in Northern Ireland, the Russians in Chechnya and the Israelis in the West Bank is proving true for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. Notwithstanding a huge and impressive military effort, the security situation, at least for now, is worsening."

She said this over a year ago, and it is now true today. Since that time, some 700 Americans and probably at least 10 times as many Iraqis have died, and every single day they are dying. So although I rise to thank the Prime Minister for his carefully stated words, might I say to my colleagues that we still are languishing without direction.

So I ask the President to stand before the American people, present to us a plan of survival and existence and progress. Present to us a step-by-step methodical progress of being able to return our troops and honor the increasing utilization of Iraqi law enforcement and military and begin to answer the questions of some of those who we will hear in just a moment.

Maybe it should be Senator LUGAR, who, when asked the question over the weekend, why has a great part of Iraq not been rebuilt, he simply said without any qualms, and I guess he said it before he heard it, because the administration is incompetent. So we can see that statements are being made by a number of those on the other side of the aisle that are now coming together as Americans, pleading for some direction by the administration.

My words simply tonight as I close, Mr. Speaker, are this. We can hear from the leadership, the interim leadership, that elections may be coming, that we may be making this work; but the violence says something different. We are failing the Iraqi people, and we are failing the United States military because we do not have a plan.

We in Congress are grateful to His Excellency the Interim Prime Minister Allawi for his inspiring remarks on the floor. He very articulately laid out the important issues that are now attendant and that lie ahead for Iraq—they include "Military Strategy," "Iraqi Elections," "International Help," and "Freedom."

He spoke of the positive aspects of these issues; however, we in the United States must realize that there are very pressing issues to be addressed by this administration within our own borders as well as on the battlefield for our troops. To that end, I ask the question: "Where is the plan Mr. President?"

I was privileged to visit some of our troops when I traveled to CENTCOM in April. I learned of their experiences in Iraq and I heard the challenges that they faced. I continue to be impressed by how well those young men and women in uniform represent the United States. They perform their duties and meet the demands of their positions every day despite the tough conditions and sometimes inadequate supplies.

The troops are fulfilling their duties, now it is time that the administration fulfills its duty by creating a real plan to create and keep the peace in Iraq. The administration must also jumpstart the process of rebuilding in Iraq. Clearly, the situation cannot continue. We are losing soldiers daily and families are being left heartbroken because peace has not prevailed in Iraq, not even in Baghdad where the administration said the United States military had a stronghold.

Worse yet, our allies are backing away from their commitments to join the effort to secure

Iraq. Turkey has decided not to send troops to Iraq. Japan will not be sending personnel and it is providing less money for rebuilding than it once offered. Even South Korea has said that the lack of security in Iraq makes the idea of sending South Korean troops untenable. Where now is the joint effort that the President promised? How will the administration secure the assistance that is clearly needed in Iraq? The number of casualties is increasing at an alarming rate; when will it stop?

I believe that the administration must embrace a multilateral peace process to bring lasting peace to Iraq and to create an environment in which rebuilding can safely occur. A multilateral process is needed not only to develop and maintain peace within Iraq but also throughout the Middle East region.

Therefore, in addition to creating a plan in Iraq the President needs to create a plan to truly engage our allies. That is how the United States will be successful not just in the short term but for years to come. That is how we can responsibly follow up the inspiring words of His Excellency Prime Minister Allawi.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McCOTTER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EDWARDS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STRICKLAND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RYAN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ETHERIDGE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk tonight about the Lee-Capuanosanders discharge petition which is H.J. Res. 748. This resolution requests immediate consideration of H.R. 1102, which is the National Affordable Housing Construction Program, a trust fund, which targets funding and resources to States and localities to assist people in the most desperate need for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, today, many of us recognize that we do live in two Americas, one for the wealthy and one for those who are struggling to just make ends meet. We have families living in dilapidated rental units, clutching to potentially meaningless section 8 vouchers, facing the harsh realities of high-cost housing or homelessness; but we have an opportunity here to make a real difference in the lives of people who need just a bit of our help, people, families, children, men and women.

We have an opportunity to help support families in their desire to build intergenerational wealth for the future. At a time of State budget crunches and shortfalls, we have an opportunity here to support our States who want to build safer, more affordable quality communities for our most vulnerable constituents.

Discharging H.R. 1102 under an open rule to the House floor would at least allow us to debate the need for more affordable housing and show where our national priorities really are. I know that our constituents want us to authorize a national affordable housing trust fund because it would construct 1.5 million affordable housing units over the next decades.

The Center For Community Change estimates that a national affordable housing trust fund would create 1.8 million, that is 1.8 million, new jobs. That is nearly \$50 billion in wages, good-paying jobs; and with our economy the way it is right now, with people on the brink, with so many layoffs, you cannot tell me that 1.8 million new jobs will not make a difference in the lives of millions of people.

Mr. Speaker, just think of it, if this Congress invested a mere 5, \$5.1 billion, that is \$5 billion, that is peanuts really, \$5 billion into affordable housing, of course instead of this never-ending war in Iraq, if we did this, I mean, the war in Iraq now is upwards of \$200 billion. If we just invested \$5 billion into this trust fund, we could commit at least \$37 to \$40 million to each State for housing, \$200 billion again, Mr. Speaker, for Iraq. We should not even worry about \$5 billion. We should be supporting this bill. We should move it forward in this House. \$5 billion, again as compared to \$200 billion, that is very minimal in terms of resources.

So this does not make any sense to me, why this bill has not come to the floor for a debate, why we do not have a national housing trust fund. Signing this discharge petition will help this tripartisan bill. We have over 215 Members with the gentleman from Vermont

(Mr. SANDERS), myself, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the gentleman from New York (Mr. CAPUANO), and many, many cosponsors on both sides of the aisle, and the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), tripartisan.

If, in fact, we discharge this petition, we would really overcome whatever political obstacles there are that have prevented this realistic, sensible and targeted, affordable housing legislation from coming before this Chamber.

It is my understanding that former Secretary Mel Martinez just said he did not want it to come to this body, and that is what has happened. 214 cosponsors, I do not think it makes sense for us to allow a former Secretary of HUD to dictate the legislation that comes to the body of this House. This program can and will make a considerable difference in the lives of our constituents.

Let me just tell my colleagues, over 5,000 organizations, unions, working men and women, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, individuals have endorsed this bill and are organizing grass-roots support to really call their Members and ask them for their support and why they are not supporting it, if they are not.

We recognize the cost and the hesitation that many Members had in regard to using the FHA surplus, which was the way the bill was initially written. So that is why, in order to garner additional bipartisan support, we have revised the funding mechanism and asked that the capable appropriators find the necessary \$5 billion wherever they deem appropriate. We have negotiated in good faith on this bill, and it makes no sense for us now to be here pushing this discharge petition as we are because of the fact that it has gone through committee and that it should be debated on this floor.

□ 2045

It should be authorized because it will provide housing to all, which many of us feel, I know some may not believe this, but I believe that housing should be a basic human right, and because of that, it outweighs all of its cost.

So I encourage all Members to sign their names to the Lee-Sanders-Capuanosanders discharge petition, because together, we can build affordable futures for families and thousands of children across this country. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can prevent thousands of our elderly and low-income families from choosing between food and shelter. And in many instances, that is what is going on. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can build safe havens through affordable supportive housing instead of homeless shelters for women fleeing domestic violence. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can build more opportunities for home ownership and mixed-income communities in rural and urban America.

Investing in H.J. Res. 748 means investing in a national affordable housing trust fund and providing a greater